

P E T I T I O N

1 Commissioner for Patents
 Alexandria, VA 22313

Your Petitioners, RICHARD D. FOWLER and TED R. TAYLOR, citizens of the
United States and a residents of the State of Texas, whose post office addresses are
5 3403 Dan Morton Drive, Dallas, Texas 75236 and 3403 Dan Morton Drive, Dallas,
Texas 75236, respectively, pray that Letters Patent may be granted to them for an

ADHESIVE SHELF TALKER

as set forth in the following specification.

10 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to point-of-purchase product identification labels, and more particularly to a shelf talker having a selectively detachable portion for the removal of information that is no longer applicable to the product being identified.

15 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

Point-of-purchase labels are frequently secured to the forward edge portion of product shelves in order to promote the product's brand identity, units of measure and price. Shelf talkers are a special type of point-of-purchase label that are typically used for price comparisons, discount prices and various promotions. Typically, the shelf talker is larger than the permanent product label affixed to the edge of the shelf and extends outwardly from the shelf in some manner to increase the visibility of the product being promoted. When the promotion is over, the shelf talker is removed, and a permanent product label is put in its place.

While the use of shelf talkers has become popular for identifying promotional
1 products, prior art shelf talkers suffer from a number of drawbacks. First, the use of a
permanent product label and a separate shelf talker doubles the number of point-of-
purchase labels that must be prepared and secured to the edge of the shelf. Some
5 prior art shelf talkers must also be configured with specialized structures that allow the
shelf talker to be temporarily hung from the shelf without interference with the
permanent product label. An example of one such shelf talker is disclosed within U.S.
Patent No. 6,408,553, which teaches a shelf talker that is temporarily secured to a shelf
10 bracket using an adhesive strip and specially constructed bracket engagement lips,
which secure the shelf talker in place.

Accordingly, typical methods of identifying certain products that are later placed
on a special promotion require a permanent label to be prepared and a certain amount
of labor to install the label on the edge of the shelf. When the promotion is initiated, the
15 separate shelf talker must be prepared; and again, labor must be expended to remove
the permanent product label and secure the shelf talker in its place. Once the
promotion for the product is over, additional labor must be expended to remove the
shelf talker, prepare a new permanent label and secure it to the shelf. While the
amount of money, materials and labor involved in this process are fairly insignificant for
20 any one product, these unnecessary expenditures add up when hundreds of different
products need identification in a single store. This may occur several times in a single
year and in many stores across the country, in the case of a national chain.

1 Accordingly, what is needed is a shelf talker that is able to provide both the permanent product label and a separable promotional information portion to help reduce the expenditure of materials and labor in the identification and promotion of a product.

5 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The shelf talker of the present invention is generally provided with a label sheet having upper and lower end portions that are selectively separable from one another. The upper end portion is preferably provided with product information typically found on permanent product labels. The lower end portion is provided with product information 10 typically relating to time-sensitive promotions of the product. A pressure-sensitive adhesive is provided along the back side of the label sheet. A liner sheet is bonded to the adhesive and the back side of the label sheet.

When the label sheet is separated from the liner sheet, the upper end portion of 15 the label sheet can be secured to the edge portion of the shelf beneath the product being identified, which leaves the lower end portion of the label sheet to hang beneath the edge of the shelf. Upon completion of the promotion, the lower end portion of the label sheet can be quickly and easily removed from the upper end portion of the label sheet, leaving the same behind as a permanent product label. In a preferred 20 embodiment, a portion of the liner sheet remains coupled to the back side of the lower end portion of the label sheet, substantially covering the same.

In a preferred method of making the shelf talker of the present invention, a repositional adhesive is used to allow the shelf talker to be adjusted and easily removed

when necessary. A lightweight non-curl liner is preferably used, which lends itself to
1 continuous form, fanfold, roll or separate sheet end product, depending on the printing
application desired. A preferred method of printing the product information onto the
label sheet may utilize impact, laser, thermal imaging and other imaging technologies to
assist in reducing the cost of the end product.
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It is therefore one of the principal objects of the present invention to provide a
two-part shelf talker that provides both a permanent product label and a separable
promotional information portion.

A further object of the present invention is to provide a shelf talker that reduces
10 the total materials and labor used to identify and promote products at a point of sale.

Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a shelf talker having a
two-part liner sheet for use with a separable promotional information portion.

Still another object of the present invention is to provide a shelf talker that is
15 constructed using a lightweight, non-curl liner.

A further object of the present invention is to provide a shelf talker that is simple
in construction and use.

Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a shelf talker that greatly
reduces the time spent implementing shelf talker-style product promotion.
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These and other objects of the present invention will be apparent to those of skill
in the art.
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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

1 Figure 1 is a perspective view of one embodiment of the adhesive shelf talker of the present invention as the same may be prepared along with a plurality of adhesive shelf talkers on a single liner sheet;

5 Figure 2A is a forward perspective view of one embodiment of the adhesive shelf talker of the present invention;

Figure 2B is a rearward perspective view of the adhesive shelf talker of Figure 10
2A; and

10 Figure 3 is a perspective view of the adhesive shelf talker of Figure 2A as the same could be used to identify products on a shelf display.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The adhesive shelf talker 10 of the present invention is generally depicted in Figures 1-3. In its preferred embodiment, the adhesive shelf talker 10 is generally provided with a label sheet 12 having an upper end portion 14 and a lower end portion 16. In one embodiment, which is described more fully hereinbelow, the label sheet 12 is provided with a line of weakness 18 that extends across the width of the label sheet 12 in a generally perpendicular fashion. The line of weakness 18 may be formed in one of several ways, including microperforations, die cuts, or the like. The line of weakness 18 permits the selective separation of the upper end portion 14 from the lower end portion 16. In a preferred embodiment, the label sheet 12 is preferably constructed from a lightweight, non-curl liner, including, but not limited to, monomeric vinyl, polymeric vinyl, biaxially-oriented polypropylene, and the like.

The label sheet 12 has a forward surface 20 and a rearward surface 22. The
1 forward surface 20 is adapted for receiving printed indicia thereon, relating to the
products that the adhesive shelf talker 10 will be promoting. In one embodiment, it is
5 contemplated that the upper end portion 14 of the label sheet 12 will be provided with
information relating to the identity of the product's brand, its units of measure, and the
price of the product. Other information may certainly be included; however, it is
contemplated that this information will typically relate to that information which would be
commonly found on permanent product labels in a retail display setting. In this same
embodiment, the lower end portion 16 of the label sheet 12 will be provided with time-
10 or event-sensitive information, such as price comparisons, discount prices, manager's
promotions, and the like. Again, it is contemplated that virtually any indicia could be
provided to the lower end portion 16 as the specific needs present themselves.

The rearward surface 22 of the label sheet 12 is preferably provided with a
15 pressure-sensitive adhesive. Although many different types of adhesive could be used
in the present application, it is contemplated that preferred embodiments may
incorporate one of a removable acrylic emulsion, cold temperature acrylic emulsion, a
permanent acrylic emulsion, or other similar variations thereof. The adhesive selected
will depend upon the particular application desired. For example, permanent adhesion
20 may be desired in one setting, whereas a repositional adhesive may be more desirable
in those use settings which may require the adjustment or moving of the adhesive shelf
talker 10.

A liner sheet 24 is generally coupled with the adhesive laden rearward surface
1 22 of the label sheet 12. Several different liner materials could be incorporated within
any of the embodiments of the present invention, including, but not limited to, Super
5 Calandered Kraft, machine-finished, poly-coated, lay flat, or the like. In one preferred
embodiment, a series of back cuts or other lines of weakness are provided into the liner
sheet 24 directly behind the lower end portion 16 of the label sheet 12. Preferably,
these back cuts will form a closed shape that is similar in size and shape to the lower
end portion 16. An example is depicted in Figure 2B. The series of back cuts provide a
secondary liner 26, which is selectively removable from the liner sheet 24 when the
10 label sheet 12 is removed from the liner sheet 24. The secondary liner 26 depicted in
Figure 2B is shown having a preferred size relationship with the lower end portion 16 of
the label sheet 12 wherein a small perimeter edge portion of the lower end portion 16 is
15 left uncovered by the secondary liner 26. This small peripheral edge portion is
preferably coated in the adhesive that coats the rearward surface 22, and thus assists
in securing the lower end portion 16 of the label sheet 12 to the liner sheet 24 until the
label sheet 12 is selectively removed therefrom. However, it is contemplated that the
20 secondary liner 26 could be provided in nearly any shape and size compared to the
lower end portion 16 of the label sheet 12. For example, a larger or smaller peripheral
edge portion of the lower end portion 16 could be left exposed by the secondary liner
26, depending on the circumstances of the particular application at hand. It is further
contemplated that the size and shape of the secondary liner 26 could be equal to or
25 larger than the lower end portion 16 of the label sheet 12 when desired.

In a preferred embodiment, depicted in Figure 1, the adhesive shelf talker 10 is
1 assembled to have a plurality of label sheets 12 disposed on a large liner sheet 24 in
spaced relationship with one another. In this manner, a smooth, perforation-free edge
portion can be provided to the label sheet 12 in an effort to enhance its appearance.
5 Moreover, the spaced relationship of the label sheets 12 and the back cuts that define
the secondary liner 26, either separately or together, greatly increases the ease and
speed with which the label sheets can be separated from the liner sheet 24. However,
it is contemplated that each of the plurality of liner sheets 12 could be positioned closely
10 adjacent one another and separated using selectively-placed lines of weakness to form
the peripheral edge of the individual label sheets. The large liner sheet 24 will still be
preferably provided with a plurality of back cuts or lines of weakness, which define the
plurality of secondary liners 26, closely adjacent the lower end portions 16 of each label
sheet 12. Depending upon the printing format desired, the liner sheet 24 can be
15 provided in a number of different forms, including a continuous sheet, separate smaller
pages or sheets, continuous pin-fed sheets separated by perforated ends, and other
such formats.

In one preferred embodiment, flash fusion printing is used to dispose the indicia
20 on the forward surface 20 of the label sheet 12. The use of flash fusion requires less
heat than most laser imaging and provides more material flexibility during the
manufacturing and assembly process. This will provide the added benefit of a lower
cost typically incurred in prior art shelf talker designs. This includes the use of the
lightweight, non-curl liners, such as the polypropylene examples given previously. Such

1 materials will hold their form and resist stretching better than the final stock that is
currently being used in prior art shelf talkers. To improve impact, laser, and thermal
imaging of the indicia on the forward surface 20 of the label 12, a top coating may be
provided to the forward surface 20 prior to the printing of the indicia. These top
coatings may be water-based, UV-cured, solvent-based, or other. The particular top
coating used will depend upon the particular application, the materials being used, and
the imaging technology being used. It is contemplated, for example, that the present
invention lends itself easily to LED array-continuous, laser diode-continuous, direct
thermal, thermal transfer, laser diode-sheeted, LED array-sheeted, or other similar
5 imaging technologies.
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In use, the adhesive shelf talker 10 of the present invention easily identifies any
product in nearly any display setting. One common setting will include a display where
the label sheet 12 is coupled to the forward edge portion 28 of a shelf 30, directly in
15 front of a particular product 32. Such an example is depicted in Figure 3. In the
embodiment depicted, it is preferred that the upper end portion 14 of the label sheet 12
be shaped and sized accordingly to fit the shape and size of the shelf edge 28 from
which the label sheet will depend. Where a line of weakness 18 is incorporated into the
label sheet 12, it is preferred that the size and shape of the upper end portion 14 of the
20 label sheet 12, or its location on the forward edge portion 28 of the shelf 30, be such
that the line of weakness 18 be positioned adjacent the bottom of the forward edge 28.
In this manner, the upper end portion 14 can display indicia relating to the product,
which is less time- or promotion-sensitive than the indicia disposed on the lower end
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portion 16 that will typically relate to discounts, manager's promotions, "bonus buys,"
1 and the like. Accordingly, in the example depicted in Figure 3, the label sheet 12 is
positioned on the forward edge portion 28 of the shelf 30 so that the lower end portion
16 hangs below the forward edge portion 28. The lower end portion 16 in this particular
5 example is advertising a temporary bonus buy savings. Once the promotion has
ended, the lower end portion 16 of the label sheet 12 can be easily detached from the
upper end portion 14 at the line of weakness 18. This will leave the "permanent"
product label (the upper end portion 14 of the label sheet 12 in this example) behind for
continued identification of the particular product. The secondary liner 26 positioned on
10 the rearward surface 22 of the lower end portion 16 will substantially prevent the lower
end portion 16 from adhering unintentionally to products or adjacent structure and will
further assist the user in detaching the lower end portion 16 from the upper end portion
14. It is contemplated that the secondary liner 26 will be of assistance where the shelf
15 talker is to be used against a larger continuous surface, rather than the narrow edge of
a shelf, and continue to provide a means for easily detaching the lower end portion 16
from the upper end portion 14 when the promotion is over. Moreover, the use of the
secondary liner with the lower end portion 16 will fortify the lower end portion 16 as it
hangs from the edge portion 28 of the shelf 30. Such fortification may be desirable
20 when relatively thin label stock is used or the display conditions would otherwise
overcome the ability of the lower end portion 16 to hang in a substantially straight
fashion.

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In the drawings and in the specification, there have been set forth preferred
1 embodiments of the invention; and although specific items are employed, these are
used in a generic and descriptive sense only and not for purposes of limitation.
Changes in the form and proportion of parts, as well as substitution of equivalents, are
5 contemplated as circumstances may suggest or render expedient without departing
from the spirit or scope of the invention as further defined in the following claims.

Thus it can be seen that the invention accomplishes at least all of its stated
objectives.

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